

AHRQ's Primary Care Practice Facilitation Forum

This email newsletter is the first step in building a learning network for individuals with an interest in practice facilitation. We are using this listserve to share perspectives on questions and answers submitted by learning forum members, as well as resources, research articles, and events of interest.

June 29, 2012

Perspectives from the Field

Why should a facilitation program develop a business plan?

Below are some perspectives from two PF experts:

- *Michael Parchman, MD, MPH, MacColl Center for Health Care Innovation Group Health Research Institute, Group Health Cooperative*
- *Lyndee Knox, PhD, LA Net*

Other programs are likely to have different perspectives, depending on their focus, context, and other factors. How does your experience compare?

Please submit your responses to PracticeFacilitation@mathematica-mpr.com and we will share them in upcoming newsletters.

Why should a facilitation program develop a business plan?

Michael Parchman: Fundamentally a business plan describes the sources and distribution of resources within a PF program. It is critical for planning both start-up activities and for ensuring the sustainability of a program because it forces you to consider the on-going resources required to support your infrastructure. However, it is more than just a description of your finances; it also provides a framework for setting goals and objectives as well as defining the long-term mission of the organization in a manner that supersedes specific projects. It can also inform the timeline of the development of your program.

Lyndee Knox: Developing a business plan for your PF program can help you think differently about your program and what it has to offer. In the non-profit and academic communities, it can be easy for the tail to begin to wag the dog; in other words, to think about the work you are doing parsed by funding sources/contracts/ grants (e.g. projects by project) rather than as a comprehensive program that is supported by a series of contracts and grants. Developing a business plan for your PF program can help a director begin to view the PF program not as a series of grants but as a comprehensive program that requires a variety of funding sources to support. For example, instead of LA Net being involved in facilitation projects to support chronic kidney disease (CKD) guideline implementation, or diabetes quality improvement, LA Net has a PF program that provides long-term quality improvement support to safety net practices, and is currently being funded to do work in CKD or diabetes.

Viewing a PF program as a comprehensive program changes everything--including how one talks about the program, the approach to hiring and training, and activities to develop the program. Looking at the

various PF programs across the country, some of the more successful ones are those that view themselves as comprehensive programs funded by a variety of sources, rather than a series of separate projects based on funders.

A business plan can also help program directors think strategically about long-term growth and funding for their programs, determine where their program fits in the healthcare landscape, and identify gaps they might fill or areas of redundancy. This increases a program's relevance to the local community, and helps identify other groups that might make good strategic partners and collaborators.

Developing a business plan also forces a director to clearly define the value the PF program provides to the healthcare community. Facilitation is a popular topic right now and is an idea with a considerable amount of emotional and face validity. But what value does it really add to the community? And what are the opportunity costs to the healthcare community for investing dollars in facilitation as opposed to other methods of evidence translation and quality improvement? Going through the rigor of developing a business plan forces the program and its director to develop robust answers to these questions—which in turn strengthens the program and its services.

Resources

Check out the [PCPF Updates page](#) at the [PCMH Resource Center](#) for information about upcoming learning opportunities, previous editions of the PCPF eNewsletter, and slides and audio from previous Practice Facilitation Webinars.

Please also visit the PCMH Resource Center at www.pcmh.ahrq.gov to explore white papers, briefs, a searchable citations database, and other resources related to the Patient-Centered Medical Home and primary care improvement.

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